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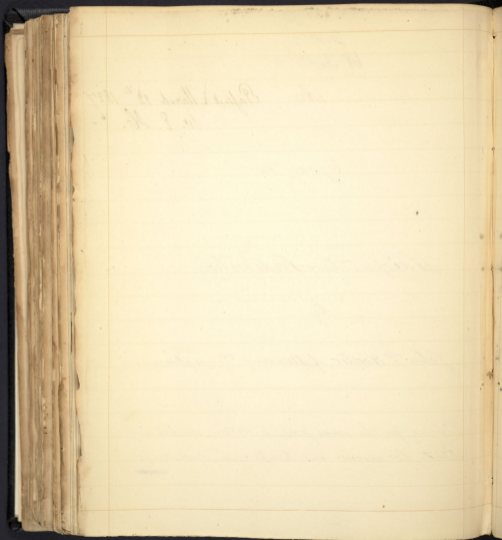
Essay on

Laxipathic Indigestion

by

John L. Alder of Reading Pennsylvania.

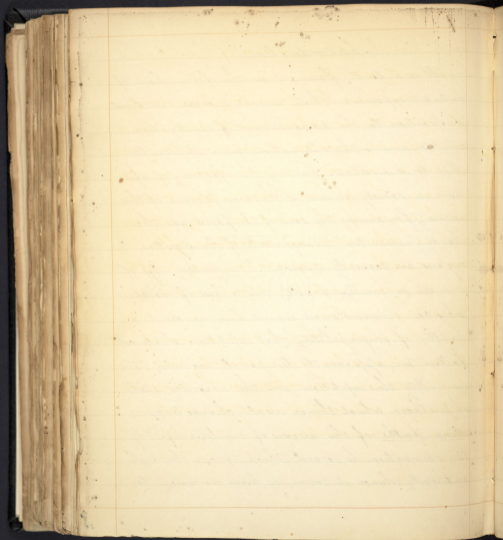
"Physic, for the most part, is nothing else but a substitute for exercise and temperance." Spect. Nov 178



+ Johnson on the Influence of Civil Life &c

Introduction.

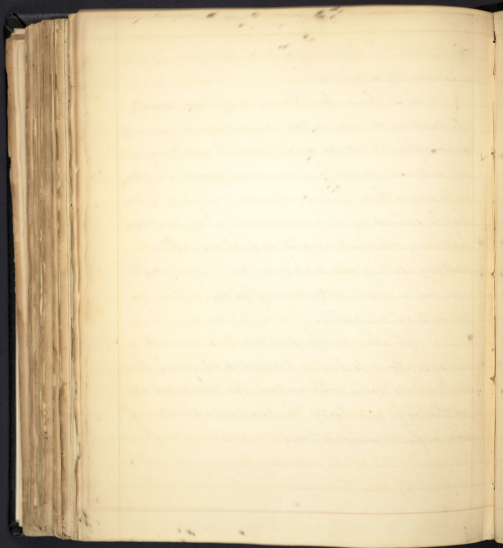
It is a truth founded on the firm basis of extended experience that, diseases increase in direct proportion to the advancement of civilization, - and to none is this observation more applicable than to indigestion. Luxury, the offspring of refinement in society, indeed, is the very parent of this disease; for among the sons of the forest and the hardy peasantry, derangements of the digestive organs are scarcely known. The sedentary life of a man in civilized society, and a host of moral & physical circumstances around him, render it a matter of impossibility that repletion shall not follow ^{even} an apparently temperate regimen; and in reality this repletion, and the irregular state of plethora which thence result, characterize - nine-tenths of the diseases of civilized life.* If this observation be correct, which, from the high authority whence it comes, we have no reason to



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doubt, then the high importance of this subject is sufficiently established.

As I have been for a long time severely afflicted with indigestion myself, and have of course reflected much on its nature and treatment, not only as it occurred in my own person, but also in many others, I have thought proper to make this the subject of my inaugural essay; and hope that my observations and deductions, after meeting with your approbation, may hereafter serve me as sound data in mitigating a few of the evils of mankind.

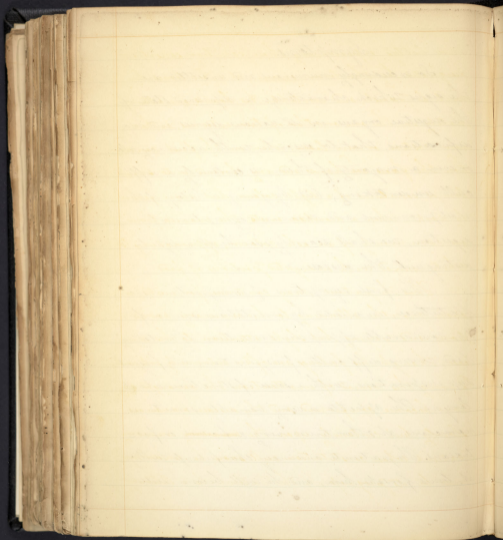
I shall in the first place enumerate the symptoms as far as is practicable; next I shall make some observations on the causes and pathology; and lastly, the treatment shall receive a full consideration.



Symptoms.

So exceedingly numerous and unsettled are the signs which characterize a disordered state of the digestive organs, in its various degrees and modifications, that to describe with accuracy all, or even a majority of them, is certainly a difficult undertaking; but by giving a history of the most prominent and common symptoms of indigestion, we shall scarcely ever be at a loss to distinguish the disease.

The first symptoms of indisposition are flatulence, indicated by eructations, sour or fetid, considerable oppression some time after taking food, causing difficulty of respiration, and frequent deep inspirations, with a sense of stricture about larynx. The appetite is very variable, sometimes voracious, at other times very deficient or fastidious. The patient's ordinary cheerfulness will at times forsake him, and he will become dull



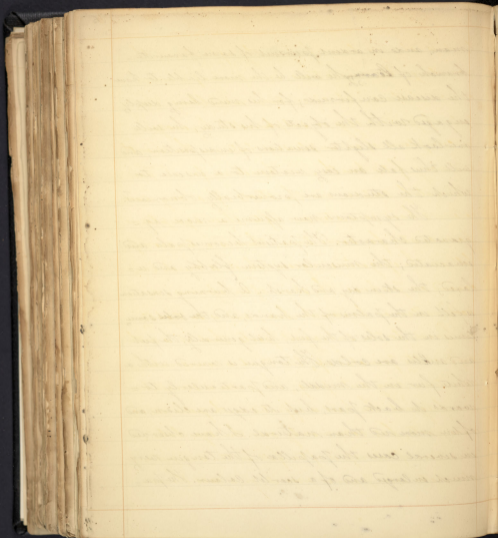
and listless, experiencing those peculiar sensations designated by the term anore; at other times he will be peevish and irritable. His bowels are alternately in the one or other of two extremes, either very costive or very loose, when in the first condition, the faeces are hard and dry, formed into small lumps, sometimes of a light colour, but more generally dark; when a diarrhoea exists, the evacuations are commonly of an ash colour, approaching to white, mixed with indigested portions of food.

Thus the patient may continue for weeks, or even months attending to his ordinary associations, and paying but slight attention to his disease, though his feelings are often extremely irksome. During this period of inattention the disordered actions become confirmed, and the disease advances slowly but certainly upon the ~~unconscious~~ unconscious patient whose constitution will soon be undermined by its progress. If the patient be a literary

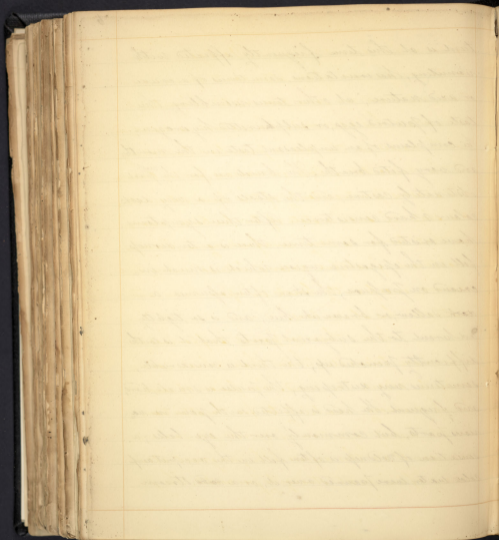
+ *Calla Morbus creditorem.*

man, and in ardent pursuit of some favourite-
branch of ~~learning~~^{science} he will be the more liable to have
the disease confirmed; for his mind being deeply
engaged with the objects of his study, he will
overlook all slighter sensations of indisposition, and
will thus fall an easy victim to a disease to
which the studious are proverbially obnoxious.

The symptoms now assume a more ag-
gravated character. The patient becomes pale and
emaciated; the muscular system flabby and re-
laxed; the skin dry and harsh. A burning sensation
is felt in the palms of the hands, and the soles some-
times in the soles of the feet, but generally, the feet
and ankles are cold. The tongue is covered with a
white fur in the middle, and particularly to-
wards its back part, but its edges are clean, and
often more red than natural. I have observed
in several cases the papillæ of the tongue very
much enlarged and of a scarlet colour. The pa-

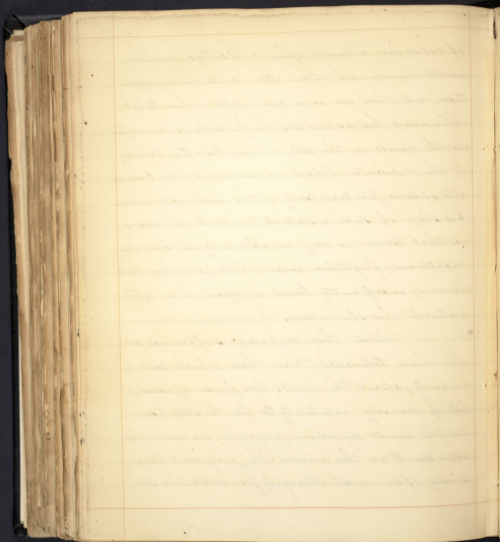


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tient is at this time frequently affected with
vomiting, has eructations, sometimes of a coarse
or acid nature, at other times resembling the
taste of putrid egg, or sulphuretted hydrogen;
he complains of an unpleasant taste in the mouth,
and very fetid breath. The bowels are for the ^{most} part
obstinately constipated, and the stools of a very dark
colour & hard consistence. After these symptoms
have existed for some time, there is a tenderness
felt in the epigastric region which is much in-
creased on pressure, the skin often assumes a -
~~dark~~ sallow, or brownish hue, and is so tightly
adherent to the subjacent parts that it is with
difficulty pinched up; the thirst is considerable,
sometimes very distressing; the pulse is small, hard,
and frequent. The head is affected with pain in va-
rious parts, but commonly over the eye-balls; a
sensation of coldness is often felt in the occiput as if
cold water were poured over it, or a ~~cold~~ stream



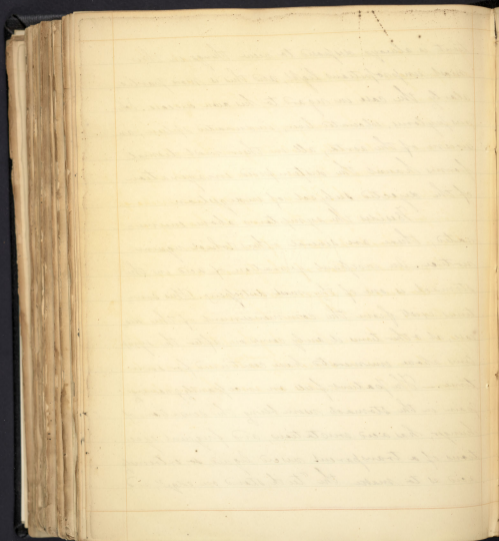
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of cold air directed upon it. Vertigo and per-
verted vision are often attendants on indig-
nation, and there are some cases related where total
blindness has occurred. The patient is harassed
with noises in the ears, a peculiar twitching
of the muscular fibres in various parts, cramps
and spasms particularly of the lower extremities.
His sleep, if such a state of turbulence allows
us that term, is very unrefreshing: — cramps,
nightmare, frightful dreams, like so many evil
demons, incessantly break in upon him and
disturb his slumbers.

But these corporeal sufferings are
far more tolerable than those which coin-
cidentally assail the mind. Confusion of ideas,
loss of memory, inability to fix the attention,
and the duped digestion of spirits are common
attendants on this disease. The judgment also
is very often most strangely perverted. The pa-

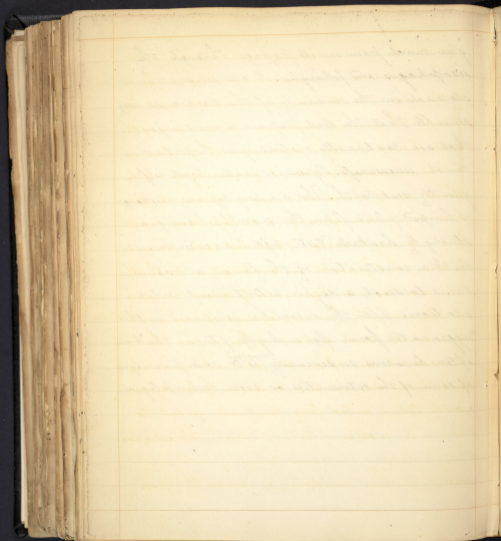


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tient is always disposed to view things in their most unpropitious light, and this is more particularly the case in regard to his own disease. Various pylores, ulcerated liver, invaginated spleen, aneurism of the aorta, all in their most dismal forms haunt the distempered imagination of the dejected subject of indigestion.

Besides the symptoms above enumerated, there are several others which require notice. An incessant generation of acid in the stomach is one of the most distressing. This sometimes exists from the commencement of the disease, at other times it only comes on after the symptoms above enumerated have continued for some time. — The patient feels an incessantly gnawing pain in the stomach resembling the sensation of hunger, has acid eructations, and frequent ejections of a transparent viscid liquid, so extremely acid as to make the "teeth stand on edge", and



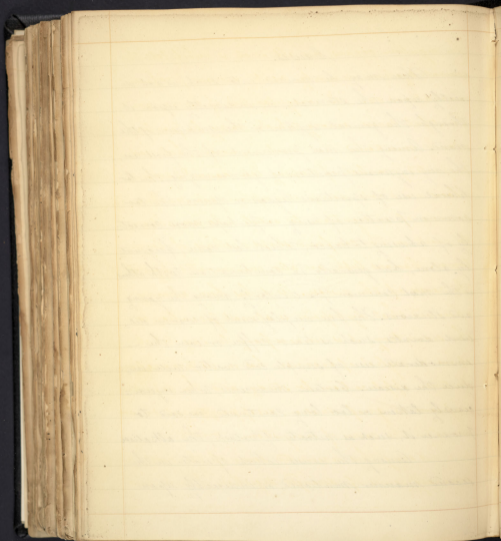
give much pain in its passage through the
 esophagus and pharynx. It also renders the
 stomach in the vicinity of the cardia so very
 sensible that the least pressure from the gases
 that are continually evolved, gives the patient
 much uneasiness. Pyrosis, or water brash is fre-
 quently met with. This is a very copious discharge
 of limpid fluid from the mouth, having a
 strongly brackish taste, often accompanied
 with a constriction of the fauces, and some-
 times to such a degree as to prevent artic-
 ulation. After the disease has continued in this
 aggravated form for a length of time, the brain
 often becomes so seriously ^{involved} as to cause paralysis
 of some of the extremities, or even hemiplegia.



Causes.

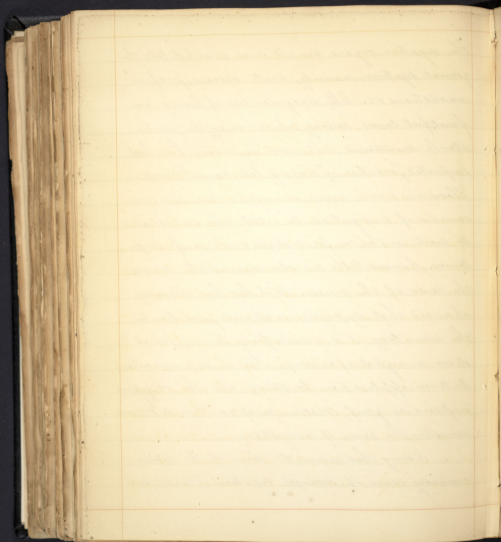
These may be divided into such as act directly upon the stomach, or indirectly upon it through the general system or the medium of the mind. Among the most prominent of the first are, the very injurious practice of gormandizing, the too liberal use of spirituous liquors or opium, the too common practice of using, or perhaps more correctly of abusing tobacco; which last cause, frequently alone, but generally in combination with others is the most common, particularly among the young and studious. The free employment of warm diluent drinks, such as tea & coffee, or even the immoderate use of simple cold water will induce the disease. Certain medicines, when injudiciously taken or too long continued, are said to produce it, such as Nitrate of Potash, the alkaline

Among the causes which operate in the second manner mentioned, or indirectly upon



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The digestive organs, are all such as debilitate the
general system, namely, acute diseases, profuse
evacuations &c. All irregularities of living are
fruitful causes, among which may be partic-
ularly mentioned that most injurious, but least
suspected practice of keeping late hours. Damp-
floors and a cold damp atmosphere are common
sources of indigestion to artists who are obliged
to work in the confined shops & cellars of large
towns. Various tiths are also enumerated among
the causes of the disease. As it has been already
observed that dyspepsia is almost peculiar to
the sedentary, it is unnecessary to say what
share a neglect of exercise has in its production.
Intense application to study, and the depressing
passions as grief, malice, disappointment &c, are
also often the causes of indigestion.

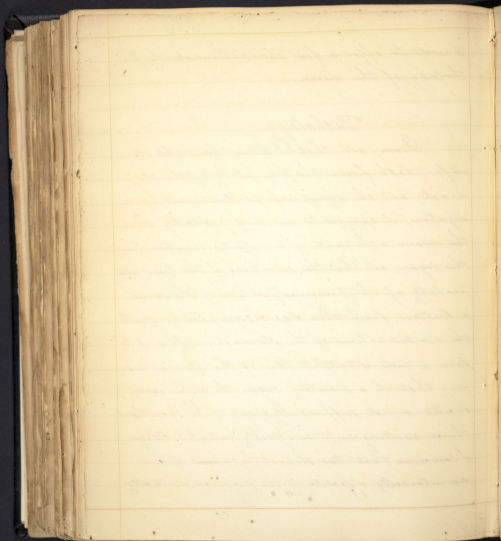
Having thus recounted some of the most
ordinary causes of deranged digestion I will now



proceed to offer a few observations on the pathology of the disease.

Pathology.

From all that I have been able to infer both from the physiology of the stomach, and the symptoms and treatment of indigestion, it appears to me very probable that the disease is the result of a vitiated secretion from this organ, and that the secretions of the liver and probably of the pancreas partake of the same vitiation, from these organs sympathizing with the morbid action of the stomach. — It is, I believe, a well established law of the animal economy that if a secretory organ be either over-excited, or not sufficiently excited, the secretions thence resulting will be equally vitiated. Now I conceive that two states of the above viscera, diametrically opposite, will produce virtually



the same effect on the process of digestion. We may have, in the first place, debility, or want of excitability of the stomach, — or, secondly, we may have a state of irritability, or chronic inflammation, which indeed is most generally the state of this viscus; in either of which cases, according to the law above referred to, we will have an unnatural secretion, and consequently indigestion.

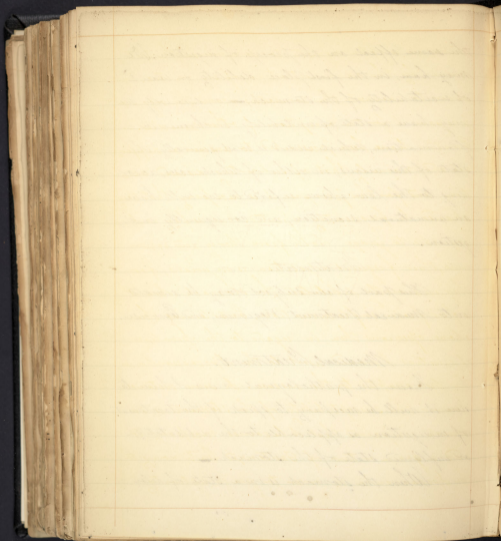
Treatment.

This part of our subject may be divided into Medical Treatment, Regimen, and Exercise.

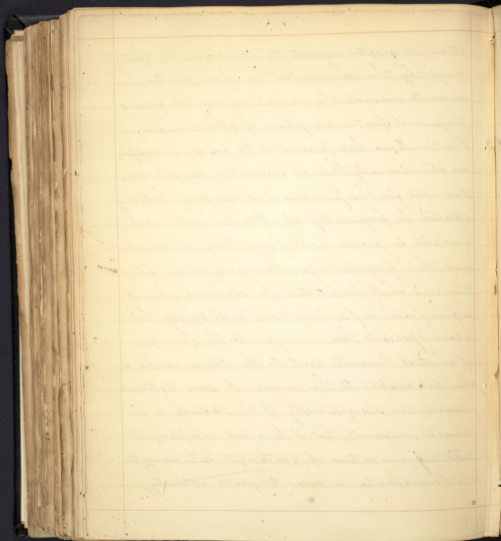
Medical Treatment.

From the pathological views I have to give, it will be necessary to speak of the treatment of indigestion as applicable to the debilitated, — or inflamed state of the stomach. —

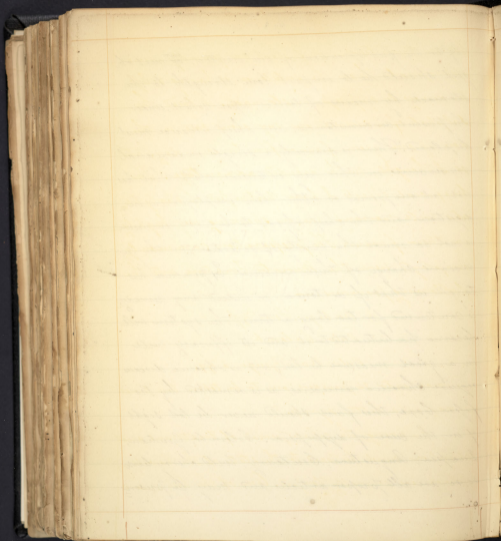
When the stomach is in a state of relax =



ation it is often requisite to commence the treatment by the administration of an emetic, in order to evacuate the cruditie from this organ & prepare it for the reception of other remedies. — Emetics have been prescribed to answer a different end, namely, that of subverting diseased action, and for this purpose it is necessary that they should be frequently repeated. But as far as I am able to judge, both from theory and experience, their frequent repetition is injurious, for they indirectly debilitate the stomach when it is free from inflammation. Entertaining the above opinions then in regard to the operation of emetics, I would resort to the Spicacuenka as the best adapted to the disease. In some instances however, the susceptibility of the stomach is so much impaired, that it becomes necessary to add a grain or two of Fortified Antimony to the Spicacuenka in order to give it activity.



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After the free operation of the emetics, ^{our} next ob-
ject should be to impart ^{new} strength to the
stomach, by means of tonics, upon which, under
the present circumstances, our chief reliance must
be placed. There is scarcely a single individual
medicine in this very extensive class, that has
not, at one period or other, been employed in in-
digestion, and the chief object to be kept in view,
is not so much the nicety of selection, as the ju-
dicious change of these remedies. Experience has
taught us that if a tonic, or indeed any remedy,
is continued for too long a time, the system will
become habituated to it, and its efficacy will
in a great measure be lost, and as chronic disease
require chronic remedies, as is remarked by Pro-
fessor Boze, this fact should never be lost sight
of in the cure of dyspepsia. Colombo, Gentian,
Quapin, Angustura, Cautery, Wild-cherry bark
&c, &c, are all proper articles and may be prescrib-



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led in their turn. Infusions are generally more appropriate than the substance, as having a less tendency to oppress the stomach. I tried the Sulphate of Quinine in my own case in the dose of one grain four or five times a day, and as I thought, with decided advantage. The beneficial effects I have witnessed of chalybeates will warrant me in speaking very highly in their favour. The preparations commonly employed were the Muriated Tincture and the following powders:—

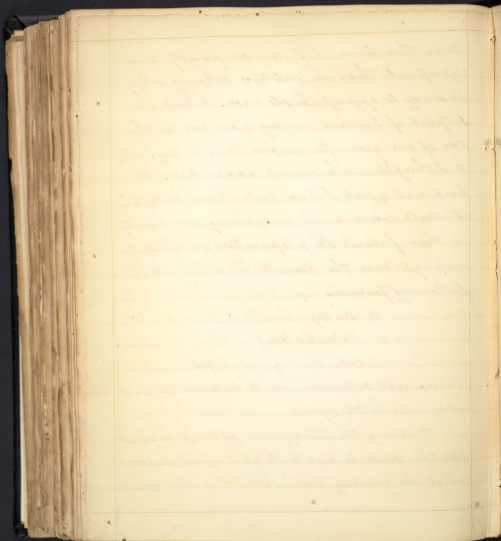
℞. Rad. Zing. ℥ss,

Pulv. Colomb.

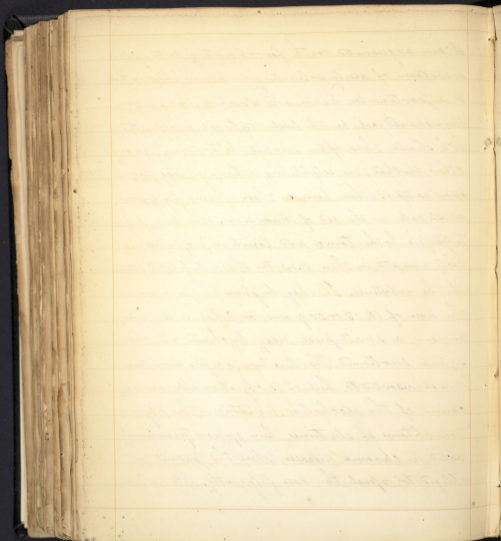
Pulv. Rad. Zing. ā ℥ss,

Divide into 34 powders, one to be taken ten times a day in a little syrup.

During the whole period of treatment great attention must be paid to the state of the bowels, which are generally torpid. One of the best means



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I am acquainted with for obviating costiveness is
a custom of daily soliciting an alvine evacuation
at a particular hour, and repeating this if even
there should not be the least natural inclination.
We shall thus often succeed, better than by any
other method, in establishing a habit of regular
evacuation. When however these means fail, we
must seek in the aid of medicine. Rhubarb, which
possesses both tonic and laxative properties, is
well adapted, in these cases, to the debilitated state
of the intestines. It may be given in powder in
the dose of 10, 15 or 20 grains, or, what is very con-
venient, a small piece may be chewed and the
saliva swallowed. The tincture is a preparation
much resorted to, but it is objectionable on ac-
count of the alcoholic menstruum; this objec-
tion obtains at all times, but appears peculiarly
valid in chronic diseases, where the patient is
obliged to repeat the dose frequently. Alas is one

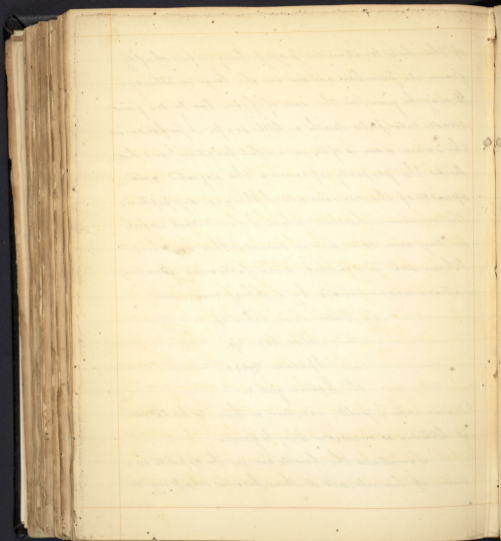


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of the best laxatives we possess, being useful chiefly
from its peculiar action on the large intestines.
It may be given in the dose of from two to six grains
made into pills with a little soap. Rhabarbar in
the same dose is often a useful laxative, and has
besides the property of rousing the dejected and
spirited of the nervous and lithargic dyspeptic.
The medicine however which I found most useful
in my own case, and in several others in which
I have seen prescribed, is the following combina-
tion recommended by Dr. Chapman:—

Ry Pulv. Rad. Rhei ʒj,
— Alou Soc. ʒj,
— Specac. ʒss, x,
Ol. Lavul gut. x.

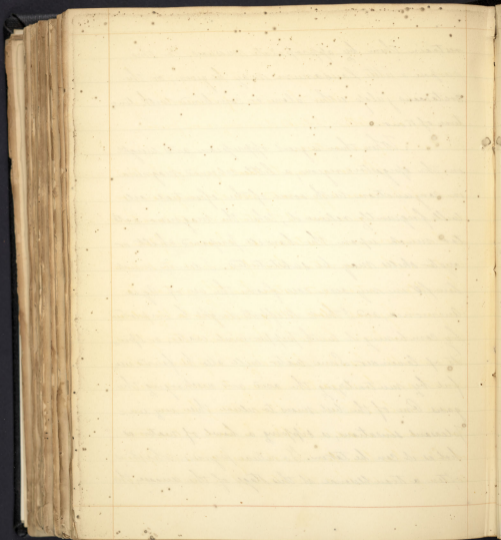
Divide into 30 pills; one, two, or three to be taken
at bedtime as occasion may require.

Sometimes the bowels are in the opposite ex-
treme of looseness, and it then becomes necessary to



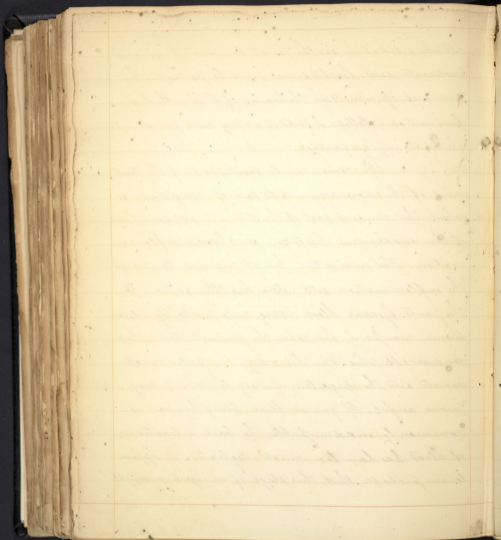
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restrain them by appropriate measures. For this purpose a little laudanum may be given, or the ectaticus julep either alone or combined with tincture of kino.

When there is great oppression and weight in the epigastrium region, a little calcined magnesia in conjunction with some of the essential oils will frequently relieve it; when the magnesia acts too much upon the bowels, prepared chalk or oyster shells may be substituted. I derived much benefit in my own case from the use of Aqua Ammonia, and I think its effects might be improved by combining it with peppermint water, or Spirit of lavender. Some water will also be found useful by neutralizing the acid and discharging the gases. One of the best means to relieve these very unpleasant sensations, is sipping a bowl of water as hot as it can be taken. No relief pyrexia, which is often a troublesome at this stage of the disease, the

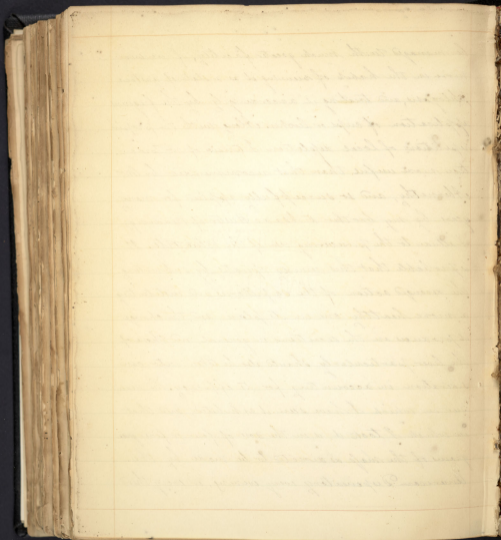


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alkalis & silex, in the must be resorted to in appropriate doses. Gastrodynia must be palliated by means of opiate. Here the Opioid of Bismuth has been much extolled, I tried it in my own person without any advantage.

We come now to treat speak of the treatment of the more aggravated cases of indigestion, or where the mucous coat of the stomach, and sometimes of the duodenum, has taken on chronic inflammation. The indication here of course is, to subdue the inflammation and restore healthy action to the parts. General blood-letting will probably seldom become necessary, but when the patient's strength is considerable, his skin hot & dry, the pulse much accelerated and the epigastrium very tender, it may prove useful. If general blood-letting however is commonly inadmissible, the local detraction of blood has been too much neglected. It appears to me probable, that this stage of indigestion might



be managed with much greater facility, if we were more in the habit of viewing it as a state of gastric phlogosis, and treating it accordingly by the frequent application of cups or leeches. Along with the proper repetition of local depletion I know of no practice more useful than that recommended by Mr. Abernethy, and so successfully applied for many years by my brother Dr. Isaac Huster of Reading. I allude to the persevering use of the Blue Pill. It is probable that this remedy operates by subverting the deranged action of the capillaries and instituting a more healthy one in its place; and the change it produces on the secretions in general and those of the liver particularly, should also be taken into consideration in accounting for its efficacy. The manner in which I have seen it exhibited, and that in which I took it, is, in the dose of four or five grains of the mass as directed to be made by the American Dispensatory every evening, or every third



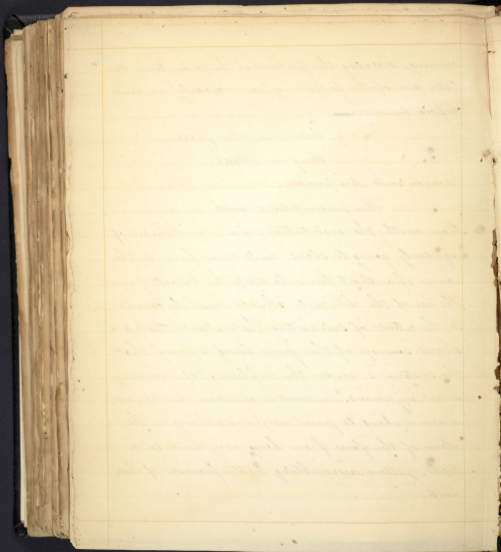
evacuating the patient at the same time to take one of the following powders daily an hour before dinner:—

℞. Pulv. Rad. Rhei grs. XXX.

Magnus. Ut sup. ℞.

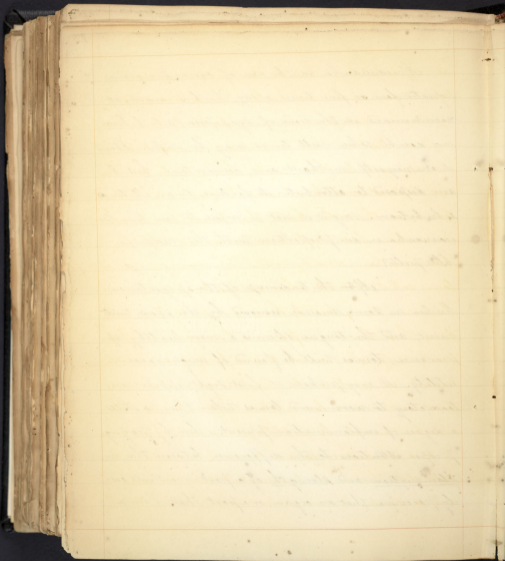
Divide into ten powders.

These prescriptions with in conjunction with the institution of a proper habit of regularly going to stool, will near fail, in the course of a short time, to keep the bowels open. The use of the blue pill should never be carried to the extent of salivating the patient, though a slight soreness of the gums, being a proof that the system is under the influence of mercury, is not injurious. The sure indication that the medicine is about to prove useful, is a change in the colour of the face from being very dark to a light yellow, resembling sweetened powder of rhubarb: when this appearance is met with,



Spasmancha in the dose of one or two grains repeated four or five times a day, has been much recommended in the cure of dyspepsia, and I have no doubt when well timed may be useful. I tried it on myself without any advantage, but I am disposed to attribute its failure to an ill-timed exhibition. Might it not be useful to combine *Spasmancha* in due proportion with the nap for blue pills?

After the tenderness of the epigastrium has been in some measure removed by the above treatment, and the tongue assumes a more healthy appearance, tonics will be found of unequivocal utility. It may perhaps at first sight appear contradictory to recommend tonics when there is still a degree of inflammation present, - but by paying proper attention to the difference between the inflammation and strength of a part, we shall easily perceive that an organ, or a part that is in a



state of debility, is still liable to inflammatory action, indeed even more liable than a strong part. If then a weak part be more liable to take on inflammation than a strong one, and tonics give strength to those parts, their utility in those cases will at once be obvious. It may indeed be contended on the other hand that tonics may be useful forerunners, but must be detrimental when inflammation already exists. This reasoning is, to a certain extent, correct, when applied to active inflammation, but I think it is pretty well established that chronic inflammation occurs in those parts only where vitality is deficient, or in other words, in weak parts. Then have we have a weak part in which a low inflammation existed, but has been reduced by depletory measures, which brings it to a condition so analogous to a simple debile state that in its treatment it may be considered as such. Experience also bears me out in my

Charcoal may be given in the dose of a tablespoon
ful in a little syrup.

opinions, not only in the treatment of indigestion but also of several other diseases, as chronic rheumatism, indolent abscess &c. The most suitable Tonics under these circumstances are the infusions of the simple bitters such as colombo, gentian, quapnia &c.

After we have drawn a sufficient quantity of blood by cupping & leeching, and along with the tonic and mercurial treatment, it will often be very useful to keep up an irritation on the epigastricum by means of blisters or tartar emetic ointment.

When the patient is troubled with that loathsome symptom, fetor of breath, the char coal will be found useful.†

In those cases where there is a continued generation of acid in the stomach, the exhibition of the mineral acids will be found the most useful. It was the Nitric acid that first gave me any relief & restoration, after being affected in this painful manner for nearly three months, and after having

* The first idea of taking the nitrate as a record
was from Bombardier's location on six cases of the ab-
dominal viscera.

ing experienced no benefit from a variety of remedies taken at the suggestion of several of the most distinguished physicians of this country. Its immediate effect ~~was~~ was to relieve oppression, and it finally enabled me to remove costiveness and procure a shew on the face similar to mercury, to which I conceive its action is very analogous. In regard to the sympathetic affections such as vertigo, paralysis I have nothing to add, as they will generally be cured by a removal of the gastric disorder.

Regimen.

This is certainly of the highest importance to the subject of indigestion, and ~~was~~ its proper regulation must be considered a *sin qua non* to recovery. All the medicines in the list of the apothecary will be of no avail, unless a strict regard be paid to regimen.

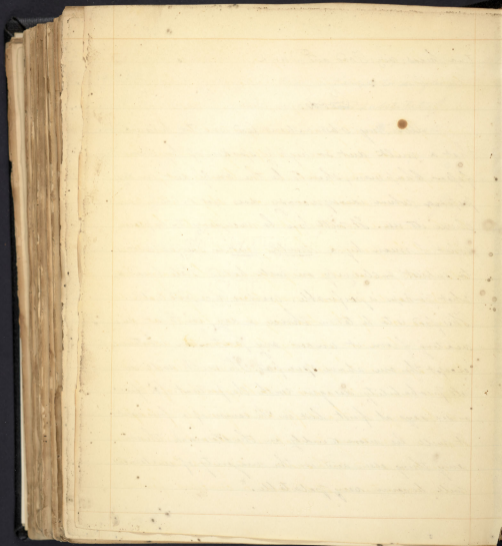
This part of the subject may be treated under

* When milk, after a fair trial, is found to disagree with the stomach, cream may be tried substituted, which will often be digested by the most delicate stomach.

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two heads, viz: Food and Drink.

Food.

All my observations lead me to believe that a milk diet so highly spoken of by Professor Chapman, should be the only diet in dyspepsia where idiosyncrasy does not entirely exclude its use. It will have been necessary to explain what I mean by a milk diet. - The patient is to subsist exclusively on well-baked stale bread, or what perhaps is preferable, crackers, rice, and milk. This food is to be taken thrice a day, without deviating from it under any pretension whatever, except the one above specified. The milk will in all probability disagree with the patient for five or six days at first, but in the course of a few weeks it will be more kindly on the stomach than any thing else, and in the majority of instances will become very palatable.*



It may not be improper here to say a few words on several preparations of milk not in common use. — My remarks on this subject may appear trifling and unimportant to those who, from actual practice or suffering know not how to appreciate them; but in the benevolent physician, who is aware how much a slight attention to these small matters often ministers to the comfort of his patient, they may excite some interest. Milk Punch is a very agreeable beverage, but its long continued use may become objectionable on account of the brandy it contains; as a change, however it may be ~~admitted~~ admitted. It is prepared in the following manner: — Bo a pint of good new milk add a tablespoonful of the best brandy, with a sufficient quantity of loaf-sugar and nutmeg to make it pleasant. Boiled milk properly seasoned with sugar, nutmeg &c, taken with a due proportion of stale bread, or crackers, forms

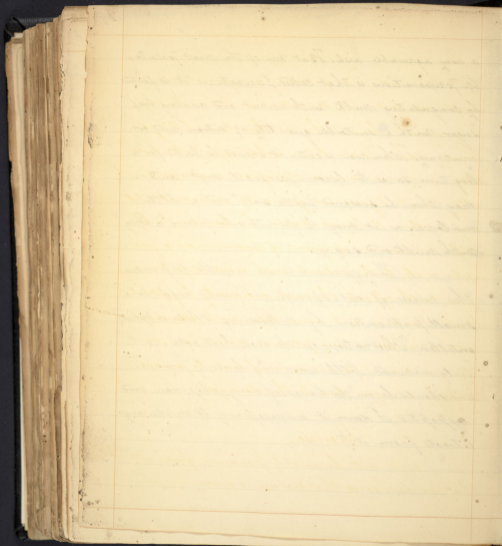
"It is an aid to digestion, we believe that more
use of soda purgatives all other saline purgatives."
Baldwell's Bulletin page 117 note.

I saw one case in which the patient became
more invincibly so omitting the use of salts
and of this I am entirely satisfied as the ex-
periment was frequently repeated. The prac-
tical deduction from this fact is plain.

"It may be proper to remark that as much regard
should be paid to quantity as to quality, for the
mildest article will disagree with the patient when
taken in too large an amount.

a very agreeable dish. But one of the most palatable preparations is that called fancate;— it is formed by coagulating milk with acet and adding loaf sugar, with a suitable quantity of Citron rind or mace. When raw is eaten it should be boiled for a long time so as to become perfectly soft; and may then be seasoned with salt and a little mace, or it may be formed into plain pudding with milk and sugar.

Those persons who are unable to pursue the course of diet specified, I would refer to a small publication by S. Mead, of Philadelphia, entitled "Observations on the sick head ache". As this truly valuable little work can be easily procured and should be in the hands of every Physician and dyspeptic, I deem it unnecessary to make any extracts from it.†



Drinks.

The best kind of drink, as a general rule, is simple ~~cold~~ water not too cold; and if there be any thing required beyond this let there be a little good bread added. Water taken as hot as possible will allay thirst and remove oppression most effectually. Malt liquors are generally interdicted, but my brother, Dr. Isaac Hister, has been in the habit for a number of years, of recommending good porter or ale to his patients with weak digestive organs with effects the most decidedly beneficial. Water sweetened and acidulated with ~~sherry~~ citric mineral makes a very pleasant drink, and in my own case I found it beneficial to remove acidity and give tone to the stomach.

Exercise.

It will be readily perceived from all that has been said that exercise is a very impor-

The diligent use of the flesh-brush morning and evening is a most powerful restorative means, and should never be neglected.

From the experience I have had in my own case I would suggest the use of the tepid or cold bath where it is followed by an agreeable ^{warm} glaucation the surface. The bath should never be taken immediately after a meal.

best measure in the cure of indigestion. The rules in regard to this are few and simple. — Exercise on horseback should always be preferred, and a journey of some length, moderately pursued, is preferable to short rides in the neighborhood. — When riding is out of the patient's power, walking must be substituted, but it should never be carried to fatigue. Exercise should be avoided when the stomach is empty, nor should it be taken immediately after eating, but, on the contrary, the patient should rest in a recumbent position for the space of an hour after every meal. — These rules must be steadily adhered to, not merely for a short time, but until the cure is accomplished.*

